



# YCAT SPRING NEWSLETTER

Issue 15 🌱 April 2025

## CEO Update *Jo Robinson*

As we reach the end of the Spring term, I want to take a moment to thank all staff, governors and trustees across our 11 primary schools for your hard work and dedication. Your continued commitment to the success and wellbeing of our pupils is greatly appreciated, and I'm grateful for all that you do to support their learning and development.

It was truly wonderful to see the majority of our class-based staff team come together at the trust training day on February 24th. The focus on maths, specifically the most effective use of the White Rose Maths Scheme, provided an invaluable opportunity to collaborate and learn together. It was fantastic to witness the enthusiasm and engagement of so many of you throughout the day. Since then, I have enjoyed visiting schools and seeing firsthand how you have already started to implement the strategies and ideas discussed during the training day. I look forward to seeing these changes continue to have a positive impact on the teaching and learning of maths across our schools.

As we continue to evolve and meet the needs of all our learners, it is important to highlight the growing significance of inclusion, particularly as we welcome more children with SEND into our schools. We must work together as staff teams to ensure that inclusion remains at the forefront of our practice. This may mean adapting our approaches and asking deeper questions about how we can provide the most effective strategies for our most vulnerable learners. Remember, inclusion isn't just about meeting statutory requirements, it's about ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive in our classrooms.

In this context, I am reminded of the words of John Hattie, who once said: *"We teachers are change agents, so if you are not happy, satisfied or pleased with something just change it, improve it, look for ways to make it better for the good of your pupils and your own. Change starts with us."* This quote encapsulates the spirit of what we do every day. Together, we have the power to create positive change for the children in our care.

Wishing you all a very happy Easter break, filled with relaxation and quality time with your loved ones. Let's return refreshed and ready for the exciting challenges ahead in the summer term.

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# Chair of Trustees' Update

*Jenny Baynes*

Dear Governors, headteachers, school staff and the central team,

As we come to the end of the Spring term, I want to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to you all. It was a pleasure to welcome Cononley Primary School to our trust in January; we are very pleased to have you as part of our family of schools.

As Trustees, we hold the Executive Team to account for the performance of our schools, and it's clear to see that YCAT schools are committed to maintaining high standards. One area where this is particularly evident is in the rigorous approach to encouraging high levels of attendance. The trust's current overall average of 96% far exceeds the national average of 94.8%, which is a real testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff.

We are also mindful of the significant challenges faced by all schools, from falling pupil numbers and increasing costs to the rising complexity of pupil needs. These factors are placing strain on school budgets, and our staff at times too. Please know that YCAT cares deeply about you all, and together, we hope to find more effective ways of working that will save time and make your roles more manageable. We're encouraged to see school leaders exploring new technologies to support staff and governor workload. In the coming months, it will be important to collaboratively explore both the positives and potential drawbacks of using AI to support this, with our Trust AI Policy serving as a starting point for these discussions. As we move into the summer, Trustees are committed to attending more networks and training sessions. I am particularly grateful to Denise McConnell and Lizzie Oliver, who have recently attended the Chair of Governors' Network and Staff and Governor SEND training sessions.

I am immensely proud of our Trust and the strong, caring, and collaborative ethos we continue to build together. It is this sense of community and shared purpose that is at the heart of YCAT and enables us to support one another through both successes and challenges. Once again, a big thank you to everyone for your continued dedication and hard work. Wishing you all a very happy Easter holiday.

Jenny

## CFO's Update

After a period of illness, we are pleased to welcome Suzanne Watson back to YCAT Central. Her return comes at an exciting time, as the Trust continues to grow and evolve. In light of this, Barbara Gill will continue in the YCAT finance team.

## My Pension Online (MPO)

My Pension Online is the Teachers' Pension online portal designed to help you manage your pension more efficiently. It is important for employees to register for MPO to ensure you understand the value of your pension and are actively planning for your retirement.

Not only can members access their personal pension information online, but you can also interact with your pension in a whole new way. You can complete a range of tasks such as:

- Checking your Benefit Statement, updated monthly
- Viewing payslips and P60s
- Updating personal details
- Completing online forms
- Accessing personalised tools and calculators

All you need to register is:

1. A few personal details
2. Your National Insurance number
3. Your email address - a personal email address is best.

Register at Teachers Pensions  
<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk>

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## OTHER NEWS



### Goodbye and thank you

After over 25 years, Dawn Alderson will be retiring from her role as administrator at Hawes Primary School. Dawn has been a vital part of the Hawes team, offering support and organisation for staff, pupils, parents, governors and the wider community. Her exemplary skills and vibrant personality will be deeply missed by all

of us! We wish Dawn all the best for her retirement and know that she will enjoy travelling and spending time with her family.

### Health and Safety update

Selena Jaconelli has been appointed as the North Yorkshire HandS Service Health and Safety Risk Adviser for YCAT. She has been a health and safety professional for 21 years; qualified with three NEBOSH certificates in Occupational Safety and Health, Construction Safety and Health, and Fire Safety at Work.



Initially, Selena worked in the Construction sector as a CDM Co-ordinator and Adviser for seven years; worked as a self-employed Ofsted registered childminder, then commenced employment at a North Yorkshire secondary school. Selena's roles within education have included: GTA, HR Adviser, Business Services Adviser/Acting Assistant Business Manager, and Premises Services Manager over two secondary schools for the last two years.

Selena is very much looking forward to working with YCAT schools.

### Another farewell

Neil Mallinson, who has worked at YCAT as Estates Manager since September, is moving on to pastures new at the end of the Spring term. We wish him all the best in his new position.



## RAwW National wellbeing award

"An anxious, frightened or angry mind simply will not learn". This is the theory behind the Teaching Times' Raising Attainment with Wellbeing programme, in which YCAT has been awarded the Gold Award. The programme aims to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of a setting, create a trauma-informed and relationships-driven culture, apply the latest research in neuroscience and remove barriers to learning using Assistive Technologies.

Sarah Beveridge, HT of Leyburn Primary School, who has driven the RAwW learning for YCAT, said, "Our project's strength was that colleagues with a wide range of different responsibilities and experiences were brought together with the same focus: 'What can we do to improve our children's wellbeing?' We had honest and open dialogue with each other, and it was a wonderful example of the collaborative and supportive nature of YCAT."



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## OTHER NEWS

### YCAT Joint Training Day with White Rose Maths

On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February, over 100 YCAT teachers and TAs joined together at Bilton Grange Primary School for a day of joint professional development with the support of White Rose Maths. Colleagues worked in phase groups, with a White Rose trainer each for EYFS, KS1 and KS2. The day included three tailored, interactive sessions, covering reasoning and problem solving, developing early number sense, mathematical talk and questioning, adaptive teaching of arithmetic and procedural variation. Participants in feedback reported finding the sessions very useful, with lots of tips and strategies that could be quickly applied in the classroom. Comments included:



*"Absolutely amazing. Thank you so much"* **"Fantastic day! Lots of inspiring ideas to implement easily"**

**"Very well organised and a good use of a training day!!"** *"Excellent practical advice I will use"*

*"Very informative and well-paced"* **"Very enjoyable session with lots of takeaways"**



### YCAT Support Networks

At YCAT, we are incredibly proud of the wide range of networks that support our staff in improving their practice and collaborating across schools. These networks provide invaluable opportunities to share ideas and continue our journey of professional growth. The Maths Network will be joined by James Cheater from White Rose Maths at their next meeting, where he will share the latest updates and initiatives. Our SENCO Network will begin to explore the upcoming changes to the Ofsted schedule for September 2025, with a focus on ensuring inclusion remains at the heart of our classrooms. The Safeguarding Network continues to work hard in sharing best practice, and in the summer term, they will focus on aligning approaches to reporting concerns and incidents, ensuring greater consistency across the trust. Our English Network will maintain its focus on oracy, while the Personal Development Network will look at supporting schools' early careers curricula, helping children to understand more about the world of work. Finally, the DHT and Senior Leader's Network has focused on effective communication as a key leadership skill, and in the summer term, we will continue to develop other essential leadership skills for success.

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# OTHER NEWS

## Whole Trust assembly on the Hindu festival of Holi

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March, Shivani Parmar, a teacher from Bilton Grange Primary School, delivered a very special online assembly all about the recent Holi festival to schools across our Trust. Ms Parmar shared information about the origins of Holi, how it's celebrated around the world and photos of the delicious food eaten as part of the celebrations as well as the colourful outfits. Children and staff from our family of schools were able to ask questions about Holi, such as, "Is Holi celebrated on the same date every year?" (Answer: It's usually celebrated in March, but the actual date depends on the phase of the moon): and "What's your favourite part of the celebrations?" (Answer: the food!). Children were encouraged to send any questions they thought of after the assembly to Ms Parmar. We hope to create more opportunities for staff and children across the Trust to share their religious and cultural experiences as Shivani did in this brilliant assembly.



## YCATering birthday

This term has seen the one-year anniversary of the launch of YCATering, our in-house catering provision.



During this time, our hardworking kitchen staff have served over 81,000 delicious school dinners to children in our schools! At a time of stringent budget pressures, schools have worked hard to keep school dinners inviting, tasty and nutritious while still offering value for money for our school communities, so we want to say thank you for all you are doing.

## Fundraising

In half term, Sarah Johnson and Kerry Young from the YCAT Central Team took part in the Barcelona Half Marathon to raise money for two charities close to our hearts, Cancer Research and The Alzheimer's Society. The weather was kind, and the scenery was beautiful, but it was nevertheless a tough 13.1 miles! Thank you to everyone who has donated; so far Kerry has raised £460 for Cancer Research, and Sarah has raised £510 for The Alzheimer's Society.

### Before



### After



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## Five years on – the lasting impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on our children

There is a wide range of research evidence that highlights the detrimental impact of COVID 19 on pupils' personal development and attainment. For example, a link is provided: [Best Evidence of the Impact of COVID 19, June 2022, EEF](#). The last five years have seen increasing gaps in children's personal and emotional development and attainment. There is also strong evidence that the gaps are widening for disadvantaged, vulnerable and SEND pupils.

During the last few months, we have seen both the DFE and OFSTED stress the need for schools to more effectively meet the needs of disadvantaged, vulnerable and SEND pupils. Below is part of the opening address by Sir Michael Oliver, Chief HMI at a National Inclusion Conference on 12 March 2025. This speech clearly confirms the increase in expectation for vulnerable children's needs. The OFSTED changes will be introduced in November 2025.

As a consequence, next term will be a good time for schools to start reviewing their provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils identifying strengths and ways to make further improvements. See the link to [EEF A school guide to implementation April 2024](#). This document provides school leaders with guidance and support for effective implementation of initiatives.



**“If you get it right for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable you get it right for everyone. I truly believe it. I mean it, I have probably said it every day since I became Chief Inspector. I truly believe that if:**

- Any school, any nursery, any college
- Any skills provider, any childminder, any children's home
- Any local authority, any adoption or fostering agency, any provider of education

**If any of them are getting it right for their most disadvantaged children, their vulnerable children, their SEND children, they will be getting it right for all of their children.**

**Conversely, I do not believe that there is a single provider who is getting it right for their most disadvantaged, most disadvantaged, at the expense of their other children and learners.**

**It's not an either/or it's not a trade-off, or a *quid pro quo*, it's just about getting it right for everyone.**

**OFSTED are putting inclusion at the very heart of the new Framework.” Sir Michael Oliver, Chief HMI.**

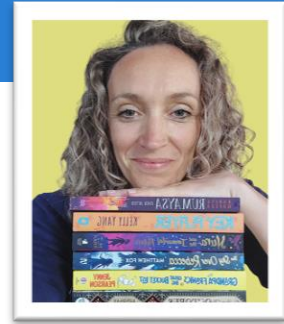


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# Book corner

## Mrs Brown's Books

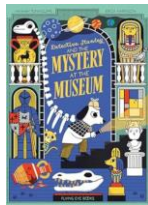
Esther Brown, KS2 teacher at Hawes Primary School and book lover @mrsbrownsbookbox



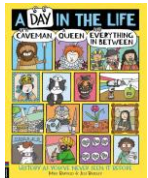
Recent research from the National Literacy Trust ([Reading For Pleasure Research | National Literacy Trust](#)) showed worrying statistics around children's reading, with numbers of children reporting to enjoy reading in their spare time declining year on year. Meanwhile, graphic novels are proving to have a powerful appeal to readers age 7-14. We may think of *Dog Man* or *Bunny vs Monkey*, brilliant for engaging children but perhaps not the quality we'd like for the classroom. However, we shouldn't overlook them; research from The University of Oregon found that comic books average 53.5 rare words per thousand, compared with 30.9 per thousand in an average children's book and 52.7 in an adult novel. There are also great graphic novels that can enhance wider curriculum learning about important topics as well as entertain. Here's a few:

### KS1

***Detective Stanley and the Mystery at the Museum*** is a mystery with a Sherlock Holmes vibe. Detective Stanley must compile the clues and solve the mystery of who has ransacked the museum. There's rich vocabulary and links to Mondrian too.



***A day in the life of a caveman, queen and everything in between*** is a vibrant and engaging non-fiction book that brings many different aspects of history to life with humour.



### UKS2



***Chang and the Sun Bear*** is an inspiring adventure based on a true story about a young conservationist in Vietnam who overcomes the odds to return a sun bear to the wild. The story includes key info about animals and the environment.



***When Stars are Scattered*** is a poignant true story of two brothers, their life in a refugee camp and their struggle to seek sanctuary in the US. Its themes will provoke much discussion and empathy.

### LKS2

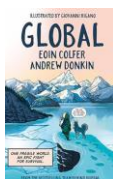
***The Brownstone Collection*** features an adventurous family and their links to different periods of history – Vikings, The Mayan Empire, Ancient Egypt to name a few. It offers creative storytelling and appealing illustrations.



***The Poo Crew*** don't let its name put you off! This graphic novel that takes you through the intricacies of the digestive system and is a perfect accompaniment to science learning.



***Tom's Midnight Garden*** is a graphic novel retelling of the classic novel and is perfect for supporting pre-teaching of providing variation of learning within the classroom to make the text accessible to all.



***Global*** is a powerful, hopeful and timely story about the real effects of climate change: two young people on different continents whose lives are catastrophically changed by global warming.

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# World Book Day

*This term we are celebrating the fun and enriching World Book Day activities across our family of schools*



*"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."  
Joseph Addison*



# Askwith Primary School



"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Dr. Seuss



# Bilton Grange Primary School



"Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible." Barack Obama



# Darley & Summerbridge Primary School Federation



"Reading is a passport to countless adventures."  
Mary Pope Osborne



# Hawes Primary School



"Books allow you to travel without ever leaving your home."  
Katrina Mayer



# Leyburn Primary School



"A child who reads will be an adult who thinks."  
Unknown



# Lothersdale Primary School



"There is no friend as loyal as a book."  
Ernest Hemingway



# Threshfield Primary School



Have a wonderful Easter break!

